

**CITY OF NORWALK
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
NORWALK HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM
JANUARY 27, 2016**

ATTENDANCE: David Westmoreland, Chair; Suzanne Betts; Eric Chandler;
Holly Cuzzone; Dana Laird; Lisa Wilson Grant; Charles
Yost; Thomas Livingston (7:04 p.m.)

OTHERS: Todd Bryant, Norwalk Preservation Trust; Tammis
Lazarus; Joanne Jackson; Bob Welsh

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Westmoreland called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr. Westmorland explained that he received a request to hold a public hearing on a
demolition permit for 78 Cranbury Road.

Mr. Westmoreland read Ms. Diane Lauricella's statement as follows:

Chairman Westmoreland

Thank you for consideration of a public hearing in relation to the
Demolition Delay request for 78 Cranbury Road, the White Barn property.

I ask that you and your Commission approved and hold a public hearing in
order to gather information and allow parties to express their thoughts.

I have attached my original Delay Request to Bill Ireland.

Due to a family emergency, I will not be able to attend tonight's meeting
but look forward to speaking again at a public hearing if granted.

This site has such great historic significance!

Sincerely
Diane Lauricella
203-858-1537

Neighbors have noted interior work activity at the Theater building of the White Barn Theater complex that appears to reach beyond what is statutorily allowed. I have attached a photo by a passing neighbor.

The site is a historical treasure and is the subject of a demolition delay request as well as two land use Appeals. Interior remediation activities can actually destroy historic materials that are needed to maintain the structures' historic legacy. Usually, the building is inventoried for historical content by a historic professional before any interior work takes place so that the abatement contractors know where they have to be especially careful.

While I understand that "remediation" such as lead paint removal and asbestos abatement may take place, my professional experience informs me that removal of the lead paint, asbestos and oil tanks is approached differently when a building is being renovated vs. when a building is set for total demolition.

There is no public use of the buildings at this time so I cannot see why the Barn building needs to have remediation given the great public interest and the discussions that we still hope to have with the owner, Jim Fieber, about saving the Theater.

According to the Demolition Delay Ordinance, there is a 120-day waiting period where parties are encouraged to discuss demolition alternatives, seek a public hearing and that the building owner cannot undertake actual demolition activity, including, as I understand it, of interior structures such as beams, walls, shelves and windows.

The neighborhood would like to ensure that this site is being handled in both the Letter and Spirit of the Demo Delay Ordinance.

Please advise and let me know if this demolition applicant is violating the Demolition Delay Ordinance.

Sincerely
Diane Lauricella

Mr. Livingston joined the meeting at 7:04 p.m.

Ms. Tammi Lazarus read the following statement:

1/27/2016

Speech for the White Barn

Request delay

I am here tonight, mostly, in honor of my Step-father, Warren Caro. He lived and breathed the theater. It wasn't about the money. It was about the art.

He managed the Shubert Organization in NYC, and was Ex. Director of the Theater

Guild-American Theater Society. He was on the Advisory Committee for the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington DC, Chairman of the American Academy of Dramatic Arts and a member of other theatrical and television organizations, including, the Westport Playhouse, and the Stratford Shakespeare Theater. These institutions didn't just appear out of thin air.

Warren won two Tony Awards. He spoke to me of this White Barn Theater, as he lived just up the road, at one point, and was very excited about it.

Warren Caro's passion for the theater is propelling me to speak out tonight. Where would the world be without preservation? We wouldn't have parks like Yosemite.

The walls of the White Barn have seen the theatrical magic. They should be saved and the show must go on! !

Norwalk needs a Star, a cultural beacon such as, The White Barn, at one time, so full of life and light.

It is especially valuable today, as transportation into NYC has become more difficult due to congestion.

Norwalk has Silvermine, the Maritime Center, and City Hall's beautiful concert space, but, there is great potential for a theater center at this Cranbury outpost. It could continue with Lortel's experimental theater, education in drama, and dance. There are many possibilities, and needs.

We have so many assets in this area, I'm sure interest and support for a positive project such as this is here.

Hold back the bulldozers and bring back the powerful romance, entertainment and joy that theater brings. These things don't happen over night.

Mr. Todd Bryant urged the Commission to hold a public hearing on the possible demolition of the White Barn Theater. The Norwalk Preservation Trust supports saving this iconic building. There has been disturbing work done on the on the building; things have been taken for "remediation", which is allowed.

Mr. Bryant said that a huge effort has been made to reverse the demolition. He urged the Commission to hold a public hearing and said that the Norwalk Preservation Trust will be there in support.

Ms. Joanne Jackson said that she has lived across from the White Barn for close to 15 years and has joined with others to try and save this important piece of American theater history.

Ms. Jackson pointed out a recent *New York Times* article about the White Barn Theater. She said that she met with Ms. Lortel's great nephew, Waldo Mayo and said that they need local fire power to save this building. She said that this is the last chance, because there are survey trucks on the property every day. She requested that the Commission hold a public hearing.

Mr. Bob Welsh said that it is rare that an event in Norwalk would get a nearly two full pages of coverage in the New York Times. He said that Lucille Lortel was a pioneer in a field dominated by men; that legacy needs to be honored.

Mr. Yost asked how the building could be saved. Ms. Jackson said that the barn has been standing since 1859 and needs some fixing. She said that Mr. Mayo's vision is to continue Ms. Lortel's vision.

Mr. Bryant said that the developer has been before Planning and Zoning for a development of 15 homes. The developer told Mr. Mayo that if he could raise \$100,000 by the end of the year, they would talk. Mr. Mayo was able to raise the \$100,000 before the end of the year. Mr. Bryant noted that the Norwalk Preservation Trust pledged \$5,000.

DEMOLITION DELAY – 78 CRANURY ROAD, NORWALK, CT 06851

Mr. Westmoreland explained that the Commission can hold a public hearing to save a property and at the end summarize the public hearing and send that to the Building Department; however, that is not binding. At the end of the delay period, March 22, 2016, the demolition permit will be issued. The idea is that a compromise will be reached.

Mr. Bryant suggested inviting the developer to the public hearing. Mr. Westmoreland said that he can't compel the developer to show up.

Mr. Westmoreland reviewed the public hearing procedures and said that the intent is to have a serious dialogue and provide the opportunity to share the views of the community.

Ms. Jackson noted that Mr. Mayo raised \$100,000 in two weeks and wishes to establish a viable theater. Mr. Bryant said that the theater and house are eligible for listing in the National Registry because of the cultural history.

Mr. Livingston asked if it would be conceivable that the developer could build some houses and keep the theater. Ms. Jackson said that would be hard to envision.

Mr. Westmoreland said that as a commission, they try to be conservative about holding a public hearing; however, in this case and because the developer indicated that they are open to it, he is inclined to vote in favor of holding a public hearing.

- ** **MR. CHANDLER MOVED THE FOLLOWING:
ACTION: HISTORICAL COMMISSION TO HOLD PUBLIC
HEARING ON THE DEMOLITION PERMIT APPLICATION FOR 78
CRANBURY ROAD DURING THE LAST WEEK OF FEBRUARY OR
FIRST WEEK OF MARCH, PER CHAPTER 55 OF THE CITY OF
NORWALK CODEBOOK**
- ** **MS. CUZZONE SECONDED**
- ** **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

ADJOURNMENT

- ** **MR. CHANDLER MOVED TO ADJOURN**
- ** **MS. LAIRD SECONDED**
- ** **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services